

**Challenges in the Crisis:
The Challenge to Worship
Isaiah 6:1-8**

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Text Introduction: We return to the book of Isaiah this morning. With the exception of a few Sundays here and there for special emphases, we have been in the book of Isaiah in this latter part of the year. We are considering this book from the general theme of “Crisis,” because it is a prophetic message from a time of crisis in Isaiah’s day, focused on the nation of Israel and more precisely, Judah. To this point, we have examined the *Confrontation that Comes from Crisis* and the *Comfort for our Crisis*.

Today, we backtrack a bit in Isaiah. For a couple of weeks here before Christmas season, I want us to consider specific challenges that we encounter in the middle of crisis. We will consider one today and one in two weeks. Today the challenge to consider is “The Challenge to Worship.”

That is—sometimes the hardest times to worship is in the middle of crisis. This is the time when we need to worship the most. We turn to what may very well be the most familiar passage in all of Isaiah—Isaiah 6.

Text: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ²Seraphim were standing above him; they each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³And one called to another:

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Armies;
his glory fills the whole earth.

⁴The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵Then I said:

Woe is me for I am ruined
because I am a man of unclean lips
and live among a people of unclean lips,
and because my eyes have seen the King,
the LORD of Armies.

⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷He touched my mouth with it and said:

Now that this has touched your lips,
your iniquity is removed
and your sin is atoned for.

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking:

Who should I send?

Who will go for us?

I said:

Here I am. Send me.

Introduction: Isaiah 1:1 indicates that Isaiah preached these prophetic messages contained in the book during the reigns of Uzziah (also called Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The years covered are 740 B.C. to at least 701 B.C. Some would say that there is evidence that Isaiah's prophetic ministry lasted until nearly 680 B.C. We must remind ourselves that this time frame puts us in the midst of the divided kingdom (Israel in the North, Judah in the South). In fact, even though Isaiah's prophecy is focused on Judah in the South, the fall of the Northern kingdom would have happened during his ministry. "Judah faces extinction at the hands of the cruel Assyrians. In this crucial hour of national emergency, God sends Isaiah—a unique man with an unpleasant message. The nation of Judah is rotten to the core and ripe for judgment. Her habitual sins of idolatry, hypocrisy, injustice and corruption have not escaped the notice of her holy God. His righteous wrath will soon fall upon king and commoner alike, that all might learn that the Lord Almighty cannot and will not be mocked."¹

Added to the ongoing sin problem of Judah is the more immediate problem of the death of King Uzziah. Uzziah had reigned as king for 52 years. Uzziah's reign, for the most part, had been a good reign. He had led the country well. As a result, there had been relative calm and peace in the kingdom. His death brought about this sort of national panic of "What now?" (We are not the first generation to worry about how bad things are in a nation.)

I think if you were to ask Isaiah about this time in his life, he would have confessed that he had depended upon the good reign of King Uzziah rather than depended completely upon King Jehovah. In this atmosphere of national and personal panic, Isaiah is in desperate need of a fresh encounter with God. That is exactly what he gets as is recorded in Isaiah 6.

But, what happens often is that we find it hard to worship in crisis.

One of the great challenges during crisis is to worship, but we must worship anyway!

We must worship because giving ourselves to worship helps us to see . . .

The Glory of God

This was a fearful time for Isaiah. The King had died. The Assyrians were coming. In the midst of these fears, while in the temple, Isaiah meets God. In this encounter, Isaiah recognizes...

God's Sovereignty—The first thing that Isaiah saw about God was His being seated on the throne and His robe. This description is a regal scene showing the absolute reign of the King of Kings. King Uzziah is dead, but Jehovah God, the one true God is very much alive and in control. This is how worship calms our fears. We seem to need that regular reminder that God is on His throne.

God's Holiness—Next, Isaiah saw God's holiness. To say that we have worshipped, but not be led to see God's holiness is foreign to true worship. True worship always ends in seeing God's holiness.

¹ *The Daily Walk Bible*, p. 809.

God's Presence—The key term of these first four verses is the idea of filling. His robe filled the temple in verse 1. In verse 2, His glory filled the whole earth. In verse 3, the Temple was filled with smoke. The idea of filling reveals that God's presence is everywhere.

I think what we discover in this text is that when we give ourselves to worship, God calms our fears. As I remind you often, "You cannot worry and worship at the same time."

The Seriousness of our Sin

In verses 5-7 the emphasis shifts away from God and to Isaiah. At some point in worship, the emphasis shifts to the recognition of who we are in light of God's holiness.

Recognition of Sin

Step One: Conviction

Step Two: Confession

Recognition of Grace—How is this good and helpful to worship? God doesn't leave us feeling helpless in our sin, but shows us His grace.

The Call to Commit

Notice the Progression of Isaiah's experience:

1. Eyes on Himself
2. Eyes on God
3. Eyes on Himself (but now sin)
4. Eyes on God (but now confession and God's Word)
5. Eyes on Others

We cannot hear from God until we have seen God and been cleansed from our sin.

Are you in the place where God wants you to be? This is a passage about Lordship. When we see God as we should see Him, we see ourselves as we should see, and then we recognize His Lordship over every area of our lives. Seeing God changes us—It changes who we are, the decisions we make, how we spend our money, what we do?

God did not call Isaiah so much as Isaiah volunteered!

Philip Yancey, in his book, *The Invisible God*, encourages his readers that when all is said and done, when crisis comes, we must either fear the crisis or fear God. What's another phrase for fearing God? Worshipping God! We must worship God always, anyway—even when we don't feel like it.

Look up! See the glory of God.

Look within! See the seriousness of sin.

Look beyond ourselves! See the call of God upon our lives.

So What?

1. I need to present myself for worship.
2. I need to prepare myself for worship.
3. I need to prepare myself to obey whatever God calls me to do.